

GREATER HIPPIAS

[or, On the Beautiful]

Translated by DAVID R. SWEET

Socrates, Hippias

281a SOCRATES: Hippias, the beautiful and wise, how long a time it's been for us since you have alighted at Athens!¹

HIPPIAS: Yes, for I've had no leisure, Socrates. For whenever Elis has to conduct some business with any of the cities, she always comes to me first among her citizens when she chooses an envoy; she considers
b me to be a most able judge and reporter of whatever speeches are made by each of the cities. Therefore I've often gone as envoy to other cities but most often and regarding the most numerous and important matters I've gone to Lacedaemon. For this reason—in answer to your question—I don't come frequently to this area.

SOC.: Such a thing it is indeed, Hippias, to be a truly wise and perfect man! For in private, when you receive great sums of money from the
c young, you are able to give them still more help than you receive, and again, in public, you are able to benefit your city as one ought if he is not to be looked down on but is to be highly reputed among the many. And yet, Hippias, whatever is the cause that those men of the past whose names are said to be great in regard to wisdom—Pittacus, and Bias, and the associates of Thales the Milesian and those still later down to Anaxagoras²—either all or most of them apparently held themselves back from political activities?

¹If the dramatic date of the dialogue is 420 (see introduction), and if Hippias' previous visit was on the occasion of the *Protagoras* (perhaps 433–32), then as many as twelve years have passed.

²Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, and Thales of Miletus all lived in the late seventh or early sixth centuries B.C. and were numbered among the traditional Seven

HIP.: What else do you suppose, Socrates, other than that they lacked
 d the power and were unable by prudence to succeed at both the common and the private?

soc.: Then, by Zeus, just as the other arts have progressed and in comparison with the craftsmen of today those of the past are poor, are we to assert that so too your art, that of the sophists, has progressed and that those among the ancients who were concerned with wisdom were poor compared with you?³

HIP.: Yes indeed, you speak very correctly.

soc.: So, Hippias, if Bias should come to life for us again now, he
 282a would be laughable compared with you, just as the sculptors maintain that if Daedalus⁴ was born now and produced works such as those from which he has acquired his name, he would be ridiculous.

HIP.: That is so, Socrates, just as you say. I myself, however, am accustomed to praise the men of the past and our predecessors both sooner and more so than I do the men of today, since I take heed of the envy of the living and I fear the wrath of the dead.

b soc.: You do beautifully, Hippias, in your use of terms and in your thinking, it seems to me.⁵ And I can bear witness for you that what you say is true and that really your art has progressed in regard to having the power to practice public affairs along with private ones. For Gorgias,⁶ the sophist from Leontini, came here in a public capaci-

Sages of Greece. For other references to them, see *Republic* 335e, *Theaetetus* 174a, and esp. *Protagoras* 339d–347a. For evidence that they did not completely hold back from political activities, see Herodotus I 27, 170; Cicero, *Republic* I 12; and Diogenes Laertius' biographies of them. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (ca. 500–ca. 428) a pre-Socratic philosopher and friend of Pericles, spent part of his life at Athens, where he was charged with impiety but fled. Among Platonic references to him, see particularly *Phaedo* 97b–99c.

³The “you” and “your” in these instances are plural, as are “you” in 282a, “your art” in 282b, and “what happened to you” in 283a.

⁴One of the stories told of the artisan Daedalus is that his statues moved. See *Euthyphro* 11c–e, 15b; *Alcibiades I* 121a; *Meno* 97d–e.

⁵Socrates is presumably referring to the beautiful way in which Hippias has just expressed himself. Hippias' use of balanced phraseology reinforced in the Greek by rhymed elements is characteristic of the rhetorical style of Gorgias. But the verb “to use terms” (*onomazein*) literally means “to name.” Consequently Socrates may also mean that Hippias does beautifully in naming the men of the past and in praising them for the reasons that Hippias has just stated.

⁶The most famous visit of Gorgias to Athens was his first one in 427 when he amazed and delighted the Athenians with his rhetorical style. For a sample of this style, see the end of Agathon's speech in the *Symposium* 197d–e and Socrates' response to it, 198b–c.

ty as an envoy from his home because he was the most able of the Leontines in the practice of the affairs of the community, and before the people he seemed to speak excellently, while privately, by making exhibition speeches⁷ and associating with the youth, he earned
 c and took out of this city here great sums of money. And if you wish, our comrade, Prodicus,⁸ has often gone elsewhere in a public capacity, but on the last occasion when he came here recently from Ceos in a public capacity and spoke before the Council,⁹ he was very highly reputed, while privately, by making exhibition speeches and associating with the youth, he received a wonderful amount of money. But
 d as a wage or to make exhibitions of his own wisdom before all sorts of human beings—so naive were those men and so unaware of how great the worth of money is. Yet each of these two has earned more money from wisdom than any other craftsman from any art whatsoever. And even before them Protagoras¹⁰ did too.

HIP.: Why, Socrates, you know none of the beautiful things about this. For if you knew how much money I have earned, you would be filled with wonder. I omit the other occasions, but once I went to
 e Sicily while Protagoras was residing there and was in high repute, and although he was older and I much younger, in a short time I earned much more than 150 minas; indeed from one very small place, Inycum,¹¹ more than 20 minas. And when I came home, bringing

⁷“Exhibition speeches” translates *epideixeis*. In the later fifth century these were ceremonial orations, as distinguished from speeches given before judicial or legislative bodies. The sophists used *epideixeis* to demonstrate their skills. Later in the dialogue Hippias invites Socrates to listen to one such speech of his (286a–c), the very speech that he has presumably just finished giving when the *Lesser Hippias* begins. Similarly, Gorgias has just given an *epideixis* at the beginning of the *Gorgias*. Other examples in Plato are Protagoras’ myth (see *Protagoras* 320b8, c1, 3) and the funeral oration of Aspasia in the *Menexenus*.

⁸Prodicus appears often in the dialogues. See esp. *Protagoras* 315c–316a, 337a–c, where Socrates represents himself as a pupil of Prodicus (341a4). Prodicus was particularly famous for the correct definition of words.

⁹The Athenian Council (*Boulē*) was made up of 500 members, 50 from each of the ten tribes, who held office for one year and prepared business for the Assembly.

¹⁰Protagoras of Abdera, among the most famous and influential of the sophists, lived for some seventy years during the fifth century. He was the author of the view that “man is the measure of all things.” Much of what is known about him rests on the evidence of Plato, especially in the *Protagoras*.

¹¹There are very few ancient references to the town of Inycum. Even its location in Sicily is in dispute, but Pausanias (7.4, 5) mentions it as the place where Daedalus found refuge when he made his winged escape from Crete and Minos.

this, I gave it to my father, so that he and the other citizens were filled with wonder and completely astonished. Why, I almost suppose that I have earned more money than any other two sophists—whichever ones you wish.

- 283a SOC.: It is a beautiful thing, Hippias, that you say, and a great proof of how much both your own wisdom and that of the human beings of today differ from the ancients. For according to your argument, the ignorance of our predecessors¹² is great, since what happened to Anaxagoras, people say, is the opposite of what happened to you. For although a great deal of money was left to him, he neglected it and lost it all—so unintelligent he was at exercising his wisdom.¹³ And they say other things of this sort also about other men of the past. So this proof which you have revealed seems to me to be a beautiful one
- b regarding the wisdom of men of today compared with our predecessors, and it seems to many that the wise man himself must be wise especially for himself. The mark of this is, of course, whoever has earned the most money. Let that be enough on this subject. But tell me this, from which of the cities you have gone to have you yourself earned the most money? Clearly, is it not from Lacedaemon, where you have also gone the most often?

HIP.: No, by Zeus, Socrates.

SOC.: What do you mean? There you have earned the least?

- c HIP.: Indeed, nothing at all, ever.

SOC.: A marvellous thing you are saying and wondrous, Hippias! Now, tell me. Isn't your wisdom the sort that makes those who associate with it and learn it better in regard to virtue?

HIP.: Very much so, Socrates.

SOC.: Then you were able to make the sons of the Inycinians better, but those of the Spartans you lacked the power to?

HIP.: Far from it.

¹²In the MSS, following *tōn gar proterōn* ("for . . . of our predecessors"), are the words *peri Anaxagorou legetai* ("said about Anaxagoras"). This comment is probably a marginal gloss explaining that "predecessors" refers to Anaxagoras. At some point the gloss entered the text, but the editor Stallbaum removed it, and later editors tend to follow his example. If one were to admit the phrase, the translation would be "For, according to your argument, the ignorance of our predecessors in the circle of Anaxagoras is said to be great."

¹³The Greek phrase *anoēta sophizesthai* perhaps contains a reference to Anaxagoras' doctrine of *nous*, or "mind" (see *Phaedo* 97b–99c), and can be translated "so mindless was he at being wise."

SOC.: Do the Sicilians then desire to become better but not the Lacedaemonians?

d HIP.: By all means, Socrates, the Lacedaemonians do too.

SOC.: Was it then from lack of money that they avoided your company?

HIP.: Of course not, since they have enough of it.

SOC.: Why would it be then that, though they were desirous and had money and though you had the capacity to help them very greatly, they didn't send you away full of money? Surely it wasn't this, was it, that the Lacedaemonians could educate their own children better than you? Or are we to assert that this is so, and do you concede it?

e HIP.: In no way whatsoever.

SOC.: Then were you not able to persuade the youth in Lacedaemon that, if they associated with you rather than with their own people, they would progress further toward virtue? Or did you not have the capacity to persuade their fathers that, if they had any concern for their sons, they ought to hand them over to you rather than to take care of them themselves? For presumably they did not begrudge that their own children become the best that they could.

HIP.: No, I don't suppose they begrudged this.

SOC.: Yet surely Lacedaemon has good laws.

HIP.: How not?

284a SOC.: And in cities that have good laws virtue is most honored.

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: And you among human beings know how to hand this down most beautifully to someone else.

HIP.: Very much so, Socrates.

SOC.: Then would not he who knows most beautifully how to hand down horsemanship be especially honored and receive the most money at Thessaly in Greece and wherever else they are serious about this?

HIP.: That is likely.

b SOC.: So will not he who has the capacity to hand down the most worthy teachings for virtue be honored and earn the most money, if he should wish to, especially at Sparta and in any other of the Greek cities which have good laws? Or do you suppose, comrade, this will take place rather in Sicily and in Inycum? Are we to believe this, Hippias? For if you bid us, we must believe it.

HIP.: No, Socrates, for it is against ancestral tradition for the Lac-

edaemonians to change their laws or to educate their sons contrary to what is customary.

c SOC.: How do you mean? That it is against ancestral tradition for the Lacedaemonians to act correctly rather than to make mistakes?

HIP.: No, I wouldn't say so, Socrates.

SOC.: Then wouldn't they be acting correctly by educating their youth in a better way and not a worse one?

HIP.: Yes, correctly, but it is not lawful for them to employ a foreign education. For know well, if anyone else had ever received money there for an education, I would have received by far the most—at least they enjoy listening to me, and they praise me—but as I say, that is not the law.

d SOC.: Do you say that law, Hippias, is harmful to a city or helpful?

HIP.: It is set down, I suppose, for the sake of helping, but yes, sometimes it harms if the law is set down badly.

SOC.: What then? Do not those who set down the law set it down as a very great good for a city? And without this, isn't it impossible to live under good laws?

HIP.: What you say is true.

SOC.: Whenever, then, those who undertake to set down the laws mistake what is good, do they mistake what is lawful and law, or what do you mean?

e HIP.: In precise speech, Socrates, this is so. Human beings, however, are not accustomed to use words this way.

SOC.: Those who know, Hippias, or those who do not know?

HIP.: The many.

SOC.: Are these, the many, those who know the truth?

HIP.: Of course not.

SOC.: Instead, presumably, those who know consider that, in truth, for all human beings the more beneficial is more lawful than the less beneficial, or don't you concede this?

HIP.: Yes, I concede that they do, in truth, at any rate.

SOC.: Then is it not so, and does it not hold just as those who know consider that it does?

HIP.: Certainly.

285a SOC.: And for the Lacedaemonians, as you assert, it is more helpful to be educated by your education, though it is foreign, than by the local one.

HIP.: And I say what is true.

SOC.: Yes, for you also say this, don't you, Hippias, that the more helpful things are more lawful?

HIP.: Yes, I said it.

SOC.: So, according to your argument, for the sons of the Lacedaemonians it is more lawful to be educated by Hippias, and less lawful to be educated by their fathers, if they really will be helped more by you.

HIP.: But they will indeed be helped, Socrates.

b SOC.: So the Lacedaemonians break the law by not giving you gold and turning their own sons over to you.

HIP.: I concede this, for you seem to me to be stating the argument to my advantage, and there is no need for me to oppose it.

SOC.: Then, comrade, we find the Laconians to be lawbreakers, and to be so in the most important matters, though they seem to be the most law-abiding. But before the gods, Hippias, what sorts of things
do they praise you for and enjoy hearing? Clearly, isn't it those things
c which you know most beautifully, matters concerning the stars and events in the heavens?

HIP.: In no way whatsoever. These things they don't even put up with.

SOC.: Well, do they enjoy hearing anything about geometry?

HIP.: Not at all, since many of them, so to speak, don't even know how to count.

SOC.: So they are far from putting up with you when you make exhibitions regarding calculations, at any rate.

HIP.: Far indeed, by Zeus.

SOC.: But of course, it's those things, isn't it, which you among
d human beings know how to distinguish most precisely—what pertains to the power of letters and syllables and rhythms and harmonies?

HIP.: Harmonies and letters indeed, my good man!

SOC.: But what is it then that they are pleased to hear from you and that they praise you for? Tell me yourself, since I'm not finding it out.

HIP.: What pleases them most, Socrates, is to hear about the generations of heroes and of human beings and the founding of cities, how in ancient times they were settled, and, in sum, the entire account of
e ancient things. Consequently, because of them I have been compelled to learn completely and to practice thoroughly all of these sorts of things.

soc.: Yes, by Zeus, Hippias, and you are lucky that the Lacedaemonians do not enjoy it if someone lists for them our archons beginning from Solon.¹⁴ Otherwise you would have trouble learning them completely.

hip.: How so, Socrates? If I hear fifty names just once, I recollect them.

soc.: What you say is true, but I was not thinking of the fact that you possess mnemonic skill. Therefore I think it likely that the Lacedaemonians enjoy you because you know many things, and they use you as children use old women to tell them stories in a pleasant way.

hip.: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and just recently I gained a great reputation there regarding beautiful pursuits by describing in detail what a young man ought to pursue. For I have an altogether beautifully constructed speech about these pursuits which is well composed in various ways, especially in its choice of words. The ostensible occasion for the speech and the beginning of it is something like this. When Troy was captured, the speech recounts how Neoptolemus asked Nestor¹⁵ what sorts of pursuits were beautiful, pursuits that would make a young man who practiced them most highly reputed. After this Nestor speaks and proposes to him very many things that are lawful and altogether beautiful. This speech I gave there as an exhibition, and the day after tomorrow in Pheidostratus' school I am also going to exhibit it here, as well as many other things worth hearing, because Eudicus the son of Apemantus¹⁶ has asked me to. So be there yourself, and bring others who are able, when they hear, to judge what is said.

soc.: So it will be, if God is willing, Hippias. For the moment, however, give me a brief answer about it, since you have reminded me opportunely.¹⁷ Recently, best of men, someone threw me into

¹⁴The principal magistrates at Athens were called archons. Eventually there were nine of them. They held office for one year, and one of them, the eponymous archon, gave his name to the year. Socrates refers to the list of these eponymous archons.

¹⁵In the *Iliad*, Nestor, the king of Pylos, is too old to fight. His role is to give the Greeks the counsels of age. Hippias considers him to be the wisest of those who went to Troy (*Lesser Hippias* 364c). Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles and Deidamia, figured prominently in the fall of Troy. See Odysseus' description of him to Achilles' shade in Hades (*Odyssey* XI 504–40).

¹⁶See note on *epideixis* 282b. For Eudicus and Apemantus, see *Lesser Hippias* 363a–c. Nothing is known of Pheidostratus.

¹⁷The Greek phrase *eis kalon* is a colloquialism meaning “opportunely,” but if translated literally, the passage also reads, “since you have reminded me of ‘beautiful.’”

perplexity during an argument, when I was censuring some things as ugly and praising others as beautiful. He asked somewhat as follows, and very insolently, "Tell me, Socrates," he said, "from where do you know what sorts of things are beautiful and ugly? For, come now, could you say what the beautiful is?" And I, because of my poverty, was perplexed, and I could not answer him properly. Then when I left his company, I was angry at myself and reproached myself, and I vowed that as soon as I chanced upon one of you wise men, after listening and learning and practicing thoroughly, I would go back to the one who asked the question to do battle again over the argument. So now, as I was saying, you have come upon "beautiful." Teach me sufficiently what is the beautiful itself, and in your answer, try to speak as precisely as possible so that I won't be refuted a second time and again be laughed at. For you, of course, know plainly, and this would presumably be a small piece of learning among the many things that you know.

HIP.: Small indeed, by Zeus, Socrates, and worth nothing, so to speak.

SOC.: Then I shall learn it easily, and no one will refute me hereafter.

287a HIP.: No one indeed. For otherwise my business would be a poor and ordinary one.¹⁸

SOC.: By Hera, you speak well, Hippias, if we shall subdue the man. But would I be a hindrance if, in imitation of him, I were to object to your arguments as you answer, in order that you might give me as much practice as possible? For I am rather experienced in objections, so if it makes no difference to you, I wish to raise objections in order that I may learn more firmly.

b HIP.: Well, make your objections, since, as I was just saying, the question is not a big one. Why, I could also teach you to answer things much more difficult than this so that no human being would have the power to refute you.

SOC.: Ah, how well you speak. But come, since even you bid me to, I will become that man as much as I can and try to ask you questions. For if you should exhibit to him this speech which you mention, the one about the beautiful pursuits, he would listen to it, and once you

¹⁸"Ordinary" in the Greek is *idiōtikon*, a word that refers to a person who is an amateur and not a professional in terms of having developed a skill (see, e.g., *Protagoras* 312b). A literal translation, however, of *idiōtikon* would contain the root "private," which is an important word elsewhere in the dialogue and is the term used in contrast to "common" and "public."

had stopped speaking, he would ask about nothing else sooner than
 c about the beautiful—for this is a certain custom of his—and he would
 say, “Stranger from Elis, isn’t it by justice that the just are just?” So
 answer, Hippias, as if he were asking.

HIP.: I shall answer that it is by justice.

SOC.: “Isn’t this, justice, something?”

HIP.: Very much so.

SOC.: “Isn’t it also by wisdom that the wise are wise and by the good
 that all good things are good?”

HIP.: How not?

SOC.: “And by these things as things that exist, for surely not by them
 as things that do not exist.”

HIP.: As things that exist, to be sure.

SOC.: “Then aren’t also all beautiful things beautiful by the beauti-
 ful?”

d HIP.: Yes, by the beautiful.

SOC.: “By it as something that exists?”

HIP.: As something that exists. For what else is it going to be?

SOC.: “Then tell me, stranger,” he will say, “what is this, the beauti-
 ful?”

HIP.: Doesn’t the one who asks this, Socrates, want to inquire what is
 beautiful?

SOC.: To me it seems not thus but rather what is the beautiful,
 Hippias.

HIP.: And in what does this differ from that?

SOC.: Does it seem no different to you?

HIP.: It doesn’t, for there is no difference.

SOC.: Well, to be sure, clearly you know more beautifully. But none-
 theless, my good man, observe. For he is asking you not what is
 e beautiful but what is the beautiful.

HIP.: I understand, my good man, and I shall answer him what is the
 beautiful, and I shall never be refuted. For, Socrates, know well, if
 the truth must be said, a beautiful maiden is beautiful.

288a SOC.: By the dog,¹⁹ Hippias, at least you’ve answered beautifully and
 reputably. If I give him this answer, shall I have answered what was
 asked and done so correctly, and shall I never be refuted?

HIP.: Yes, Socrates, for how could you be refuted about a thing that

¹⁹This is a favorite oath of Socrates. The dog apparently is Anubis, the Egyptian
 god (see *Gorgias* 482b5). See Eva Brann, “The Music of the *Republic*,” *Agon* 1:1
 (1967):4.

seems so to everyone and with regard to which everyone who hears you will bear witness that you speak correctly?

soc.: Well then. Certainly they will. Come then, Hippias, let me repeat to myself what you are saying. He will question me in some such way as this. "Come, Socrates, answer me. All these things that you assert are beautiful would be beautiful if the beautiful itself is what?" Shall I indeed say that if a beautiful maiden is beautiful, there is something on account of which these things would be beautiful?

b HIP.: Do you suppose, then, that he will still attempt to refute you on the grounds that what you say is not beautiful or that, if he does attempt to, he will not be ridiculous?

soc.: That he will attempt to, my wonderful fellow, I know well. But when he makes the attempt, the attempt itself will show whether he will be ridiculous. I am willing to tell you, however, what he will say.

HIP.: Do tell me.

c soc.: "How sweet you are, Socrates," he will say. "But a beautiful mare, isn't she beautiful, the one that even the god praised in his oracle?"²⁰ What shall we say, Hippias? Shouldn't we say that the mare, the beautiful one, at least, is beautiful? For how could we dare to deny it by claiming that the beautiful is not beautiful?

HIP.: What you say is true, Socrates, since the god has surely spoken this correctly. For among us there are very beautiful mares.

soc.: "Well, then," he will say. "What about a beautiful lyre? Isn't it beautiful?" Shall we say so, Hippias?

HIP.: Yes.

soc.: Then after this he will say—I know rather well by conjecturing from his character—"You best of men, what about a beautiful pot? Isn't it beautiful, then?"

d HIP.: Socrates, who is the fellow? How uneducated he is who dares to use low words this way in a dignified business!

soc.: Such he is, Hippias, not elegant but vulgar, taking thought for nothing else but the truth. Nonetheless, the man must be answered, and I shall go ahead of you in making a declaration. Suppose the pot had been molded by a good potter, smooth and round and beautifully fired, like some of those beautiful pots with two handles, those which

²⁰Commentators suppose that this oracle is one that Apollo gave in response to some Megarians when they asked him who were better than they. His answer was: "Of all the earth, Pelasgian Argos is better, Thracian mares and Lacedaemonian women."

hold six choes,²¹ very beautiful ones. If he should ask about this sort of pot, we would have to agree that it is beautiful. For how could we assert that a thing that is beautiful is not beautiful?

HIP.: We could in no way, Socrates.

SOC.: Then he will say, "Isn't even a beautiful pot beautiful?" Answer.

HIP.: Well, Socrates, so it is, I suppose. Even this utensil is beautiful when it is beautifully made, but as a whole it is not worthy to judge it as being beautiful compared with a mare and a maiden and all the other beautiful things.

289a SOC.: Well, then. I understand, Hippias. When he asks these questions, this is how one ought to contradict him: "O human being, you do not recognize that the saying of Heracleitus applies well here, that 'the most beautiful ape is ugly in comparison with the class of humans,'²² and the most beautiful pot is ugly in comparison with the class of maidens, as Hippias the wise asserts." Isn't it so, Hippias?

HIP.: Certainly, Socrates, you have answered correctly.

SOC.: Listen, then, for I know well that he will say after this, "What then, Socrates? If someone should compare the class of maidens with the class of gods, won't the same thing happen to him as when that of pots is compared with that of maidens? Won't the most beautiful maiden appear ugly? Or doesn't Heracleitus, whom you introduce, also say this, that 'the wisest human being, in comparison with a god, will appear an ape both in wisdom and in beauty and in all other respects'?"²³ Shall we agree, Hippias, that the most beautiful maiden is ugly in comparison with the class of gods?

HIP.: Yes, for who would contradict this, Socrates?

c SOC.: Well, if we agree to these things, he will laugh and say "Socrates, do you then remember what you were asked?" "I do," I shall say. "It was: whatever is the beautiful itself?" "Next," he will say, "although you were asked about the beautiful, do you give as an answer a thing which, as you yourself affirm, happens to be no more beautiful than ugly?" Shall I say, "It seems likely," or what, my friend, do you advise me to say?

²¹Six choes are somewhat more than four gallons.

²²Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Heracl. 82. Diels-Kranz and most editors read Bekker's emendation of *anthrōpōn* for the MSS *allōi*. If the MSS reading is retained, translate: "the most beautiful of apes is ugly in comparison with another class."

²³Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Heracl. 83.

HIP.: I advise just that. For, of course, in saying that in comparison with gods the human class is not beautiful, he will say what is true.

SOC.: "If I had asked you from the beginning," he will say, "What is both beautiful and ugly, and if you had given me the answers that you do now, you would have answered correctly, wouldn't you? But does it still seem to you that the beautiful itself, by which all other things are adorned and appear beautiful whenever this form²⁴ becomes present,²⁵ is a maiden or mare or lyre?"

HIP.: Well, of course, Socrates, if this is what he's seeking, it is the easiest thing of all to tell him what the beautiful is by which all other things are adorned and made to appear beautiful whenever it becomes present. So he is a most naive human being, and he has no expertise concerning beautiful objects. For if you tell him that this "beautiful" which he is asking about is nothing other than gold, he will be perplexed, and he won't attempt to refute you. For we all know, of course, that, wherever this becomes present, even if a thing previously appeared ugly, it will appear beautiful once it has been adorned with gold.

SOC.: You have no experience, Hippias, of how unyielding the man is and how he accepts nothing easily.

HIP.: What does that matter, Socrates? For he must of necessity accept what is said correctly, or if he doesn't accept it, he must be ridiculous.

SOC.: As to this answer, best of men, not only will he not accept it, but he will certainly also mock me, and he will say, "You deluded one, do you suppose that Phidias²⁶ is a bad craftsman?" And I suppose I shall say, "Not in any way whatsoever."

HIP.: Yes, and you will speak correctly, Socrates.

SOC.: Correctly indeed. Accordingly, when I agree that Phidias is a good craftsman, that fellow will say, "Next, do you suppose that Phidias did not recognize this 'beautiful' which you speak of?"

And I shall say, "Why in particular do you ask?"

"Because," he will say, "he made the eyes of Athena not of gold, nor the rest of her face, nor her feet, nor her hands—if in fact by

²⁴"Form" here and in 298b translates the Greek *eidos*. See note on 297b.

²⁵The Greek verb translated "becomes present" is *prosgignesthai*, which occurs here and in 289e, 290b, and 292d. This verb as well as *proseintai* and *pareintai* (both translated "to be present") and *paragignesthai* (translated "to become present") are all used to indicate the way in which a form is related to the phenomena that it informs.

²⁶Phidias, the fifth-century Athenian sculptor, was a key artist in Pericles' building program. In the discussion that follows, Socrates refers to one of his most famous works, the chryselephantine cult statue of Athena that stood in the Parthenon.

being of gold they were going to appear most beautiful—but rather of ivory. Clearly he made this mistake from ignorance, since he did not recognize that gold, of course, is what makes all things beautiful wherever it becomes present.” What then are we to answer him when he says this, Hippias?

c HIP.: Nothing difficult. For we shall say that he made them correctly, since ivory too, I suppose, is beautiful.

SOC.: “Then for what reason,” he will say, “did he not make also the middle parts of her eyes of ivory but of stone, finding stone that was as similar as possible to ivory? Or is stone too—that is, beautiful stone—beautiful?” Shall we affirm it, Hippias?

HIP.: We shall affirm it indeed, at least whenever stone is fitting.

SOC.: “But whenever it is not fitting, is it ugly?” Shall I agree or not?

HIP.: Agree, at least whenever stone is not fitting.

d SOC.: “What then?” he will say. “Do not ivory and gold, you wise one, whenever they are fitting, make things appear beautiful, but whenever not, ugly?” Shall we deny it, or shall we agree with him that he speaks correctly?

HIP.: We shall agree at least to this, that whatever is fitting to each thing makes each thing beautiful.

SOC.: “Then,” he will say, “whenever someone boils the pot that we were just speaking of—the beautiful one, full of beautiful soup—which of the two is fitting for it, a ladle of gold or of fig wood?”

e HIP.: Heracles! Such a fellow you speak of, Socrates! Don’t you wish to tell me who he is?

SOC.: No, if I told you his name, you wouldn’t recognize it.

HIP.: Well, at least I recognize now that he is someone ignorant.

SOC.: He is very captious, Hippias. Nevertheless, what shall we say? Which of the two ladles is fitting for the soup and the pot? Clearly the one of fig wood? For presumably it makes the soup more flavorful, and at the same time, comrade, you would not shatter the pot for us and spill the soup, extinguishing the fire and depriving those who are about to dine of a very noble dish. But that golden ladle would do all

291a these things. So it seems to me that we must say that the fig-wood one is more fitting than the golden one unless you say something else.

HIP.: No, for it is more fitting, Socrates. However, I at least wouldn’t converse with the fellow when he asks such things.

SOC.: Yes, that would be correct, my friend, since it wouldn’t be fitting for you to be filled up with such words, you who are dressed so beautifully and wear such beautiful shoes and are so highly reputed

for wisdom among all the Greeks. But for me it is no trouble to
 b mingle with the fellow. So teach me beforehand, and answer for my
 sake. "Now if the fig wood one is more fitting than the gold one,"
 the fellow will say, "wouldn't it also be more beautiful? For in fact,
 Socrates, you have agreed that the fitting is more beautiful than the
 not fitting." Shouldn't we agree, Hippias, that the fig-wood one is
 more beautiful than the gold one?

HIP.: Do you wish me to tell you, Socrates, what to say the beautiful
 is in order to release yourself from many arguments?

c SOC.: Certainly. Not, however, until you tell me which of the two
 ladles that I was just speaking of I should answer is fitting and more
 beautiful.

HIP.: Well, if you wish, answer him that it is the one made out of fig
 wood.

SOC.: Now then, say what you were just about to say. For by this
 answer, if I say that the beautiful is gold, it seems likely to me that
 gold will not appear as being more beautiful than fig wood. But now,
 again, what do you say the beautiful is?

d HIP.: I shall tell you. You seem to me to be seeking to answer that the
 beautiful is some sort of thing that will never appear ugly to anyone
 anywhere.

SOC.: Certainly, Hippias, and now you comprehend beautifully.

HIP.: Listen then. If anyone is able to contradict this, be sure to declare
 that I have no expertise in anything at all.

SOC.: Speak then, as quickly as possible, before the gods.

HIP.: I say, then, that always, for everyone and everywhere, it is most
 beautiful for a man who is wealthy, healthy, and honored by the
 Greeks, having arrived at old age and having celebrated beautifully
 e the funeral of his parents after they have come to their end, to be
 beautifully and magnificently buried by his own offspring.

SOC.: Hurrah, hurrah, Hippias! How wonderfully and grandly and
 how worthily of yourself you have spoken! And by Hera, I admire
 you because you seem to me to be bringing aid with good intentions,
 to the extent that you are able! Even so, we are not hitting the man,
 but now, know well, he will laugh at us most of all.

HIP.: A wicked laugh, Socrates. For when he has nothing he can say
 against this and yet laughs, he will laugh at himself and himself be
 laughed at by those present.

292a SOC.: Perhaps this is so. Perhaps, however, for this answer, at least, as
 I prophesy, he will probably not only laugh at me.

HIP.: Well, what else?

SOC.: If he happens to have a staff and if I don't escape him by fleeing, he will very well try to land it on me.

HIP.: What do you mean? Is the fellow some sort of master of yours, and if he does this, won't he be sorry and have to pay a penalty? Or
b isn't your city just? Does it instead allow the citizens to beat each other unjustly?

SOC.: In no way does it allow this.

HIP.: Then he will pay a penalty, at least if he beats you unjustly.

SOC.: It doesn't seem unjust to me, Hippias, at least not if I give this answer, but just; so it seems to me at any rate.

HIP.: Then it seems so to me as well, Socrates, if in fact you yourself suppose it is.

SOC.: Shall I also tell you why I myself suppose I would be justly beaten if I were to give this answer? Will you too beat me without a trial, or will you accept an account?

c HIP.: I shall, for it would be terrible, Socrates, if I shouldn't accept one. But how do you mean this?

SOC.: I shall tell you, in the same manner as I did just now, by imitating him, in order that I not use the sorts of expressions toward you that he will to me, ones both difficult and outlandish. For know well, he will say, "Tell me, Socrates, do you suppose that someone receives blows unjustly who, in singing such a dithyramb²⁷ so un-musically, has sung very far away from the question?" "How so?" I shall say. "How?" he will say. Aren't you able to remember that I
d was asking about the beautiful itself which inheres in everything in which it becomes present such that that thing is beautiful—stone and wood and human and god and every activity and all learning? For I am asking, human being, what beauty itself is, and I have no more power to make myself heard by you than if you were a stone sitting beside me, and a millstone at that, having neither ears nor brain." If, then, I took fright and said the following in response to these things,
e wouldn't you be irritated, Hippias? "But Hippias affirmed that this is the beautiful. And yet I was asking him, just as you are me, what is beautiful for all and always." What then do you say? Won't you be irritated if I say these things?

HIP.: At any rate, I know well, Socrates, that what I said is beautiful for all and will seem so, too.

²⁷The dithyramb was a choral hymn in honor of Dionysus.

SOC.: "Will it also be so in the future?" he will say. "For presumably the beautiful, at least, is always beautiful."

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: "Then was it also so in the past?" he will say.

HIP.: It was also so in the past.

SOC.: "As regards Achilles,²⁸ too," he will say, "did the stranger from Elis affirm that it was beautiful to be buried later than his
293a forebears, and for his grandfather Aeacus, and for the others, who have been born from gods, and for the gods themselves?"

HIP.: What's this? Throw him to the blessed!²⁹ *These* questions of the fellow, Socrates, are not even respectful.³⁰

SOC.: What then? Is it not also quite disrespectful to affirm that these things are so when someone else asks?

HIP.: Perhaps.

SOC.: "Perhaps, then, you are this person," he will say, "who affirms that for everyone and always it is beautiful to be buried by one's offspring and to bury one's parents. Or isn't Heracles³¹ too included among everyone as well as all those whom we were speaking of just now?"

HIP.: But I at least wasn't saying that it was so for the gods.

b SOC.: "And not for the heroes either, as seems likely."

HIP.: Not for those at least who were children of the gods.

SOC.: "But for those who weren't?"

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: "Then, according to your argument again, as it appears, for Tantalus among the heroes and for Dardanus and for Zethus it is terrible and impious and ugly, but for Pelops³² and the others who were born this way it is beautiful."

HIP.: To me at least it seems so.

SOC.: "Then it seems to you," he will say, "though you denied it just now, that for one who has buried his forebears to be buried by his

²⁸Achilles' parents were the mortal Peleus and the immortal Thetis. His grandfather Aeacus' parents were Zeus and the island nymph Aegina.

²⁹This phrase seems to be a euphemistic substitution for the phrase "throw him to the crows" or perhaps for "throw him into Hades."

³⁰The Greek for "respectful" here is *euphēma*, and for "disrespectful" (just below), *dysphēmon*. These terms refer specifically to words of good and ill omen, i.e., to those that may be used in a religious context and those that may not.

³¹Heracles' parents were Zeus and Alcmene.

³²Tantalus, Dardanus, and Zethus were all sons of Zeus, while Pelops was the son of Tantalus.

- c offspring is ugly sometimes and for some. And it is still more impossible, as seems likely, that this become and be beautiful for all, so that the same thing has happened to this answer as happened to those previous ones, the maiden and the pot, and even more laughably it is beautiful for some but not beautiful for others. And not yet even today, Socrates," he will say, "are you able to answer what is being asked about the beautiful, namely, what it is." These things and their like he will reproach me with justly, if I answer him in this way.
- d Now, for the most part, Hippias, he converses with me more or less in this way. But sometimes, as though pitying me for my inexperience and lack of education, he himself makes a suggestion for me by asking if the beautiful seems to me to be such and such a thing and so too as regards whatever else he happens to be inquiring about and which the argument concerns.

HIP.: How do you mean this, Socrates?

- soc.: I shall tell you. "O daemonic Socrates," he says, "stop giving these sorts of answers in this way—for they are exceedingly naive
- e and easily refuted—but consider whether some such thing as the following seems to you to be beautiful, which we even now caught hold of in your answer, when we were saying that gold is beautiful for those things for which it is fitting, and it is not for those for which it isn't, and so on in the case of all the other things for which this is present.³³ So consider whether this very thing, the fitting, and the nature of the fitting itself, happens to be the beautiful." Now, I for my part am accustomed to assent to such things every time—for I don't have anything to say—but does it seem to you at any rate that the fitting is beautiful?

HIP.: By all means, of course, Socrates.

soc.: Let's consider it, so that we aren't deceived in some way.

HIP.: Yes, it ought to be considered.

- 294a soc.: See then. Do we say the fitting is that which, when it becomes present, makes each of those things in which it is present *appear* beautiful or that which makes them *be* so or neither of these?

HIP.: To me at least it seems so.

soc.: Which of the two?

³³"This" is ambiguous in the Greek. In view of what precedes, "this" seems to refer to "gold," but in view of what follows, it seems to refer to "the fitting." "Is present" renders the Greek verb *proseinai*. See note on 289d.

HIP.: That which makes them appear beautiful.³⁴ Just as, whenever someone puts on a cloak or sandals that are suitable, even if he is laughable, he appears more beautiful.

SOC.: Then if the fitting does make things appear more beautiful than they are, wouldn't the fitting be a deception concerning the beautiful? And this wouldn't be what we are seeking, would it, Hippias? For
 b presumably we were seeking that by which all beautiful things are beautiful. It is just like that by which all large things are large, namely that which exceeds, because by this all large things are so, and even if they do not appear so but are in excess, it is necessary for them to be large. So too, we say, what would the beautiful be by which all
 c beautiful things are so, whether they appear so or not? It wouldn't be the fitting, because this makes things appear more beautiful than they are, according to your argument, but does not allow them to appear such as they are. But we must try to say what that is which makes them be beautiful, as I said just now, whether they appear so or not. For this is what we are seeking, if in fact we are seeking the beautiful.

HIP.: But the fitting, Socrates, makes things both be and appear beautiful when it is present.

SOC.: Is it impossible, then, that things which really are beautiful not appear to be beautiful, at least when that which makes them appear so is present?

HIP.: It is impossible.

SOC.: Then do we agree to this, Hippias, that all really beautiful things, both lawful things and pursuits, are both reputed to be beautiful and always appear to be so to everyone, or, quite the contrary,
 d aren't they unrecognized, and aren't strife and battle most of all about these things, both privately for individuals and publicly for cities?

HIP.: Rather the latter, Socrates. They are unrecognized.

SOC.: They wouldn't be unrecognized, at least if appearing beautiful were present in them. And it would be present if the fitting were in fact beautiful and made things not only be beautiful but also appear so. Consequently, the fitting, if it is that which makes things be beautiful, would be the beautiful that we are seeking, but not, however, the one which makes them appear so. If, on the other hand, the

³⁴Burnet's text, following Baumann, brackets Socrates' question, "Which of the two?" According to this reading Hippias says in answer to the preceding question of Socrates, "To me it seems that which makes them appear beautiful."

e fitting is that which makes them appear so, it would not be the beautiful which we are seeking. For that is what makes things *be* so, and the same thing would never have the power to make³⁵ things both appear and be either beautiful or anything else whatever. So let us choose which of the two the fitting seems to be, that which makes things appear beautiful or that which makes them be so.

HIP.: That which makes them appear so, it seems to me at least, Socrates.

SOC.: Oh, oh! There it goes, Hippias. It has fled from us, and we have failed to recognize whatever the beautiful is, now that the fitting has appeared as being something other than beautiful.

HIP.: Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and very strangely so, to me at least!

295a SOC.: Nonetheless, comrade, let us not yet give it up. For I still have some hope that whatever the beautiful is will become completely apparent.

HIP.: By all means, of course, Socrates. For it is not difficult to find. I for my part know well that if I were to go into seclusion for a short time and consider it by myself, I could tell it to you more precisely than total precision.

SOC.: Ah, Hippias, don't talk big. You see how many troubles it³⁶ has already brought upon us. It may become angry at us and run away
b still more! And yet there is nothing in what I am saying. For you, I suppose, will find it easily when you are alone. But before the gods, find it in my presence. Or if you wish, seek it with me as we were doing just now, and if we find it, that will be most beautiful, but if not, I shall be content with my fortune, I suppose, and you will go away and find it easily. If we find it now, of course, I won't be an

³⁵The MSS read *poiein einai*, which would probably dictate that one understand "make" only with "be" and not with "appear." This interpretation would then give the translation: "the same thing would never have the power to appear (as) beautiful things and to make things be beautiful." Most editors transpose the verbs and read *einai poiein*, which produces the translation given in the text. Burnet brackets *poiein*. Following him, one would translate: "the same thing would never have the power to appear (as) and to be beautiful things."

³⁶The subject "it" refers to "the beautiful," as soon becomes apparent when Socrates speaks of "it" running away, but initially the reader would assume "it" refers to Hippias' talking big, which has indeed brought them troubles. Just how it does so becomes clearer if one translates Socrates' command, "don't talk big" as "don't say 'large'" or "don't speak a big speech." The Greek word for "large" or "big," *meGas*, is characteristic of Hippias. See 281b (where it is translated as "important"), 294b, 301b, and 304b. Socrates, in contrast, is associated with little speeches.

c annoyance to you by inquiring what it was that you found out by
 yourself. So contemplate now what the beautiful seems to you to be.
 I say that it is—but be attentive to me and apply your mind com-
 pletely so I won't babble. Let this be beautiful for us: whatever is
 useful. And I said so because I was thinking this: we maintain that
 eyes are beautiful, not those which seem to be such yet do not have
 the power to see but those which do have that power and are useful
 for seeing. Isn't that so?

HIP.: Yes.

d SOC.: Then in this way we also say that the whole body is beautiful,
 one for running, another for wrestling, and so too all living things—a
 beautiful horse and cock and quail, and all utensils and vehicles, those
 on land and those on the sea, transport ships as well as triremes, and
 all instruments, those in music and those in the other arts, and, if you
 wish, pursuits and laws. We call almost all of these beautiful for the
 same characteristic. Looking carefully at how each of them is by
 nature, how it is made, how it is established, we say that the useful
 e one, for how it is useful, and in relation to what it is useful, and
 whenever it is useful, is beautiful, but the one that in all of these
 respects is useless we say is ugly. Does it not also seem so to you,
 Hippias?

HIP.: To me at least it does.

SOC.: Are we now correct in saying that the useful, more than any-
 thing else, happens to be beautiful?

HIP.: We are correct, to be sure, Socrates.

SOC.: Isn't a thing that has the power to produce something also
 useful insofar as it has the power, and isn't a thing that doesn't have
 the power useless?

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: Then power is beautiful, but lack of power is ugly?

296a HIP.: Extremely. Not only, Socrates, do other things bear witness for
 us that this is so, but especially politics does. For in politics and in
 one's own city, the powerful is most beautiful of all, but the power-
 less most ugly of all.

SOC.: You speak well. So then, before the gods, Hippias, because of
 this isn't also wisdom most beautiful of all, and ignorance most ugly
 of all?

HIP.: Yes, what else do you suppose, Socrates?

SOC.: Keep still, my dear comrade. How afraid I am again at what we
 are saying.

b HIP.: Why are you afraid again, Socrates, since now at least the argument is advancing very beautifully for you?

SOC.: I wish it were, but consider this question with me. Could anyone do something that he did not know how to do or did not at all have the power to do?

HIP.: In no way. For how could he do what he did not have the power to do?

SOC.: Then those who make mistakes and produce bad things and do them involuntarily would never do these things if they did not have the power to do them?

HIP.: Clearly they wouldn't.

c SOC.: But nonetheless, by power the powerful have power. For surely not by lack of power.

HIP.: Of course not.

SOC.: But all those who do what they do have the power to do so?

HIP.: Yes.

SOC.: But all humans do many more bad things than good, starting from childhood, and they make mistakes involuntarily.

HIP.: This is so.

SOC.: What then? Shall we assert that this power and whichever useful things are useful for producing something bad, are beautiful, or far from it?

d HIP.: Far from it, it seems to me at least, Socrates.

SOC.: Then for us, Hippias, the powerful and the useful, as seems likely, are not the beautiful.

HIP.: Unless, Socrates, they have power to produce good things and are useful for such things.

SOC.: Then this much at any rate is gone, namely that the powerful and useful, simply, are beautiful. But was it this, Hippias, that our soul wanted to say, that this is the beautiful, namely, the useful and the powerful for doing something good?

e HIP.: It seems so to me at least.

SOC.: But this is helpful, or isn't it?

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: And so, both beautiful bodies and beautiful lawful things and wisdom and all the things that we were speaking of just now are beautiful because they are helpful.

HIP.: Clearly.

SOC.: So the helpful seems likely to us to be the beautiful, Hippias.

HIP.: By all means, surely, Socrates.

SOC.: But the helpful is that which does good.

HIP.: Yes, it is.

SOC.: And that which does something is nothing other than the cause, is it?

HIP.: Just so.

297a SOC.: So the beautiful is a cause of the good.

HIP.: Yes, it is.

SOC.: But the cause, Hippias, and that of which the cause is a cause, are different. For presumably the cause would not be a cause of a cause. Consider it this way. Didn't it become apparent that the cause does something?

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: Then what is done by that which does something is nothing other than that which comes into being and is not that which does something?

HIP.: This is so.

SOC.: Then what comes into being is one thing, and what does something is another?

HIP.: Yes.

b SOC.: So the cause is not a cause of a cause but of what comes into being because of it.

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: So if the beautiful is a cause of good, the good would come into being because of the beautiful. And for this reason, as seems likely, we are serious about prudence and about all the other beautiful things, because the product and the offspring of them—namely, the good—is worthy of seriousness. And probably, from what we are finding, the beautiful is in the form³⁷ of some sort of father of the good.

HIP.: Certainly. You're speaking beautifully, Socrates.

SOC.: Then am I also saying this beautifully, that the father is not a
c son and the son is not a father?

HIP.: Beautifully indeed.

SOC.: And the cause is not what comes into being, nor in turn is what comes into being a cause.

HIP.: What you say is true.

SOC.: By Zeus, best of men, then the beautiful is not good, nor is the good beautiful! Or does it seem to you to be possible from what has been said previously?

HIP.: No, by Zeus, it doesn't appear so to me!

³⁷"Form" here translates the Greek *idea*. See note on *eidos*, 289d.

SOC.: Then is it satisfactory to us, and would we be willing to say that the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful?

HIP.: No, by Zeus, it isn't satisfactory to me at all!

d SOC.: Yes, by Zeus, Hippias, to me it is the least satisfactory of all the arguments we have spoken!

HIP.: Yes, that seems likely.

SOC.: Then probably for us it isn't the case, as it just appeared to be, that the most beautiful of the arguments is that the helpful and the useful and the powerful to do some good are beautiful. Instead, if it is possible, this argument is more laughable than those first ones in which we were supposing that the maiden, and each one of those things mentioned earlier, was the beautiful.

HIP.: It seems likely.

SOC.: And I, at least, Hippias, no longer have anywhere to turn, and I am perplexed. But do you have anything to say?

e HIP.: Not at the present moment, but, as I was just saying, when I have considered it, I know well that I shall find it.

298a SOC.: Well, because of my desire to know I don't seem to myself to be able to wait for you while you are delaying. And in fact, I suppose that I have just now come up with something. Look. If we assert that whatever makes us delighted is beautiful—not all the pleasures, but that which comes through hearing and sight—how then would we fare in the contest? Presumably, beautiful human beings, at least, Hippias, and all decorations and paintings and pieces of sculpture, whichever ones are beautiful, please us when we see them. And beautiful voices and music altogether and speeches and stories produce this same thing, so if we should give this answer to that bold fellow—"O noble one, the beautiful is the pleasant that comes through hearing and through sight"—don't you suppose we would check him in his boldness?

b HIP.: It seems to me at any rate that now, at least, Socrates, you are saying well what the beautiful is.

SOC.: What then? Shall we indeed assert that beautiful pursuits and laws, Hippias, are beautiful by being pleasant through hearing or through sight, or do they have some other form?

HIP.: Perhaps they do, Socrates, even if the fellow is unaware of it.

SOC.: By the dog, Hippias, not he before whom I would be particularly ashamed to babble and to pretend to have something to say when I have nothing to say.

HIP.: Who is he?

c soc.: Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus,³⁸ who would no more permit me to say these things easily without their being examined than to say that I know what I do not know.

HIP.: Well, since you have said so, it seems to me too that this matter concerning the laws is something different.

soc.: Softly, Hippias. For though we have fallen into the same perplexity concerning the beautiful which we were in just recently, we probably suppose that we have fallen into another solution.

HIP.: What do you mean by that, Socrates?

d soc.: I shall tell you what has become apparent to me, in case there is something in what I say, because these things concerning laws and pursuits might perhaps appear not to be outside the perception which happens to come to us through hearing and sight. But let us be patient with the argument that the pleasant that comes through these is beautiful, without bringing the issue of the laws into the center. But if this person whom I'm speaking of, or anyone else, should ask us, "Why indeed, Hippias and Socrates, have you divided up the pleasant, defining as beautiful the sort that is pleasant in the way that you say but claiming that the pleasant with respect to the other
e perceptions—of food and drink and sex and all the rest of this sort—is not beautiful? Or do you assert that they are not even pleasant and that pleasures do not exist at all in such things or in anything other than in seeing and hearing?" What shall we assert, Hippias?

HIP.: By all means, Socrates, we shall surely assert that in the other things too there are very great pleasures.

299a soc.: "Then why," he will say, "although they too are pleasures no less than those, are you taking away this name and depriving them of being beautiful?" "Because," we shall say, "there is no one who would not laugh at us if we should assert that it is not pleasant to eat but beautiful and that it is not pleasant to smell something pleasant but beautiful. And as for sex, presumably everyone would do battle with us and maintain that it is most pleasant but that if someone engages in it, he must do it in such a way that no one see, since it is most ugly to be seen." If we say these things, Hippias, perhaps he would say, "I too understand that for some time you have been ashamed to assert that these pleasures are beautiful because they do

³⁸Some MSS omit the name of Socrates. According to this reading, Socrates refers to himself simply as "the son of Sophroniscus." For other references to Socrates as son of Sophroniscus, see *Alcibiades I* 131e; *Laches* 180d, 181a; *Euthydemus* 297e, 298b.

- b not seem so to human beings. But I was asking not what seems to the many to be beautiful but what is so.” We shall say, I suppose, what we proposed. “That part of the pleasant which comes into being in relation to sight and hearing, we assert is beautiful.” But can you make some further use of the argument, or shall we say something else, Hippias?

HIP.: Considering what has been said, Socrates, it is necessary to say nothing else but this.

- c SOC.: “You speak beautifully,” he will say. “Then if the pleasant through sight and hearing is beautiful, isn’t it clear that whatever pleasant thing does not happen to be this would not be beautiful?” Shall we agree?

HIP.: Yes.

SOC.: “Then,” he will say, “is the pleasant through sight pleasant through sight and hearing, or is the pleasant through hearing pleasant through hearing and through sight?” “In no way,” we shall say, “would that which is through either one be through both. For you seem to us to be saying this. But we were saying that not only is each of these pleasant things itself by itself beautiful but also both are.” Shall we not answer in this way?

HIP.: Certainly.

- d SOC.: “Then,” he will say, “is any pleasant thing different from any other pleasant thing in being pleasant—not insofar as any pleasure is greater or smaller or more or less, but different in this very respect, that one of the pleasures is a pleasure and another not a pleasure?” It doesn’t seem so to us at least, does it?

HIP.: No, it does not seem so.

- SOC.: “Then,” he will say, “it is for some other reason than that they are pleasures, isn’t it, that you preferred these pleasures to the other pleasures? You were seeing some such thing as this in the case of both—namely, that they have something different from the others—and this is what you are looking to when you say that they are beautiful, isn’t it? For presumably the pleasure through sight is not beautiful because it is through sight, since if this were the cause of its being beautiful, the other, that through hearing, would never be beautiful. Surely the pleasure through hearing is not a pleasure through sight.” Shall we say, “What you say is true”?

HIP.: Yes, we shall say so.

- 300a SOC.: “Nor, on the other hand, does the pleasure through hearing happen to be beautiful because it is through hearing. For in that case,

again, the pleasure through sight would never be beautiful. Surely the pleasure through sight is not a pleasure through hearing.” Shall we assert, Hippias, that in saying this, the man says what is true?

HIP.: It’s true.

SOC.: “Nonetheless, both are beautiful, as you assert.” We do assert it, don’t we?

HIP.: We do.

- b SOC.: “So they have something the same which makes them be beautiful, something in common which exists for both of them in common and for each in particular.³⁹ For otherwise presumably they would not both and each be beautiful.” Answer me as you would him.

HIP.: I answer, it seems to me too to hold as you say.

SOC.: If then both these pleasures are affected in some way, but each one is not, it would not be by this being affected at least that they are beautiful.

HIP.: How could it be, Socrates, that, though neither is affected by any one at all of the things that are, both are affected by that by which neither is affected?

- c SOC.: It doesn’t seem to you that this could be?

HIP.: If it could, I would be very inexperienced both in the nature of these things and in the speaking of the present arguments.

SOC.: Pleasantly spoken, Hippias. But I probably seem to see something that holds so in just the way that you assert is impossible, and yet I see nothing.

HIP.: It’s not that you “probably” are seeing amiss, Socrates, but that you actually are.

- d SOC.: And yet many such things are appearing before my soul, but I distrust them because they make themselves apparent not to you, a man who has earned the most money for wisdom among our contemporaries, but rather to me, who have never earned anything. And I am pondering, my comrade, whether you are playing with me and intentionally deceiving me, because so many things are appearing so forcefully to me.

HIP.: No one, Socrates, will know more beautifully than you whether I am playing or not if you attempt to say what these things are that are appearing before you. For it will be apparent that there is nothing

³⁹“In particular” translates the Greek adjective *idios*, which elsewhere is translated as “private,” with the exception of the related adjective *idiōtikos*; see note on 287a.

in what you say, because you'll never find that we both are affected by that by which neither I nor you is affected.

- e SOC.: How do you mean, Hippias? Perhaps there is something in what you are saying, and I do not understand. But hear more plainly what I wish to say. For it appears to me to be possible for both of us to be affected in a way that I by myself neither undergo nor am and that you in turn are not either. But on the other hand, there are other states of being affected that both of us are, and yet neither of us is them.⁴⁰

HIP.: Again, Socrates, you are like someone whose answers are even greater marvels than your earlier answers. For consider, if both of us are just, wouldn't each of us also be just? Or if each is unjust, wouldn't both be so too? Or if both are healthy, wouldn't each be so too? Or if each of us were at all weary or wounded or beaten or affected in any other way, wouldn't both of us also be affected in this way? Furthermore, if both of us happened to be golden or silver or ivory or, if you wish, noble or wise or honored or old or young or whatever else you wish that is found among human beings, wouldn't there be a great necessity that each of us also be this?

- b SOC.: By all means, of course.

HIP.: Yes, but you, Socrates, do not consider the wholes of things, and neither do those with whom you are accustomed to converse, but you test the beautiful by setting it apart and by cutting up in the arguments each of the things that are. Because of this you do not notice the naturally large and continuous bodies of being.⁴¹ And you have failed now to notice this to such an extent that you suppose there is something, either being affected or being,⁴² which exists in relation

⁴⁰This passage involves an unusual Greek idiom, "to be affected by something so as to be that thing" (*peponthenai einai*; see also 302a and c). More literally translated, the passage reads, "For it appears to me to be possible for both of us to be affected by an affection that *I* am not affected by so as to be (it), nor am I (it), and neither are *you*. But on the other hand, there are other affections that both of us are affected by so as to be (them), and yet neither of us is (them)."

⁴¹In this sentence Hippias appears to be saying that, by nature, being is composed of large and indivisible bodies. The entire passage, however, is in dispute. For further comment, see the introduction. The word "you" in this sentence is plural, as it is in "you test" in the preceding sentence.

⁴²The Greek for the state of being affected is *pathos* and for "being" is *ousia*. *Pathos* (except at 285c1) and *ousia* are so translated in all their occurrences in this dialogue. They could also be rendered by "accident" and "essence." They appear as a pair in one other place in the dialogues at *Euthyphro* 11a.

c to these “boths” together but not in relation to “each,” or again, that exists in relation to “each” but not in relation to “both.” So illogical is your condition, and so unreflective and naive and unintelligent!

soc.: Our affairs, Hippias, accord not with what one wishes, as humans say on occasion, speaking proverbially, but with the power one has. But you help us by always admonishing us. Shall I show you still further how naive our condition was just now, before we were admonished by you about these things? Shall I tell you what our
d thoughts were concerning them or not?

HIP.: You will be speaking to one who knows, Socrates. For I know the condition of each person who is concerned with arguments. Nonetheless, if it is more pleasant to you in any way, speak.

soc.: Well, it is indeed more pleasant. For before you said these things, best of men, we were so silly as to hold the opinion concerning me and you that each of us is one but that both of us are not what each of us is—for we are not one but two—so naive were we. But by
e now we have been retaught by you that, if both of us are two, it is also necessary that each of us be two, and if each is one, it is also necessary that both be one. For by the continuous account of being, according to Hippias, it cannot be otherwise: whatever both are, each is too, and what each is, both are. Now that I have been persuaded by you, this is my position. However, Hippias, remind me of something first. Are we one, I and you, or are you two and I two?

HIP.: What are you saying, Socrates?

soc.: The very thing that I am saying. For I am afraid that you are
302a plainly saying that you are angry with me, since in your opinion there is something in what you are saying. Still, tell me something further. Isn’t each of us one and affected so as to be one?

HIP.: Certainly.

soc.: Then, if one, each of us would also be odd in number. Or don’t you consider one to be an odd number?

HIP.: I do.

soc.: So are both of us also odd, being two?

HIP.: That could not be, Socrates.

soc.: Rather, both of us are even, aren’t we?

HIP.: Certainly.

b soc.: Then just because both of us are even, each of us is not also even for this reason, is he?

HIP.: Of course not.

SOC.: So there is not every necessity, as you were saying just now, that whatever both of us are, each also is, and whatever each is, both also are.

HIP.: Not in these respects, at least, but in those which I was speaking of earlier.

SOC.: These are enough, Hippias. For even these content me, since it is apparent that some things are so, while others are not so. For I was also saying, if you remember where this argument started, that pleasures through sight and hearing were beautiful not by that thing by which each of them happened to be so affected as to be, but not both, or both but not each, but by that by which both and each were affected. I said so because you conceded that they both and each are beautiful. For this reason I was supposing that, if both are beautiful, they must be beautiful by that being which accompanies them both and not by that which is absent in them taken separately. And I still suppose so now. But tell me, as though from the beginning, if pleasure through sight and that through hearing are both and each beautiful, does not that which makes them beautiful accompany not only both of them but also each?

HIP.: Certainly.

SOC.: Then would they be beautiful because each and both are pleasure? Or because of this would all the other pleasures also be beautiful no less than these? For it became apparent that they were pleasures no less, if you remember.

HIP.: I remember.

SOC.: Instead, because they are through sight and hearing, it was said that they are beautiful.

HIP.: Yes, it was so said.

SOC.: Consider if what I am saying is true. For it was said, as I remember, that the pleasant is beautiful—not all of it but that which is through sight and hearing.

HIP.: True.

SOC.: Then does not this state of being affected accompany both of the senses but not each? For presumably each of them, as was said previously, is not through both, but both are through both, and each is not. Is this so?

HIP.: It is.

303a SOC.: Then, at any rate, it is not by that which does not accompany each that each of them is beautiful, for “both” does not accompany each, so that it is possible according to the hypothesis to assert that

they both are beautiful, but it is not possible to assert that each is. Or how shall we say it? Isn't this necessary?

HIP.: It appears so.

SOC.: Then are we to assert that both are beautiful, and yet assert that each is not?

HIP.: Yes, for what prevents us?

SOC.: The following seems to me, my friend, to prevent us: that there were for us presumably some things that pertained to individual things in such a way that if they pertained to both, they also did to each, and if to each, also to both—all those things which you went through. Yes?

HIP.: Yes.

SOC.: But not those which I went through, among which were "each" itself and "both." Is this so?

HIP.: It is.

- b SOC.: Then, Hippias, of which sort does the beautiful seem to you to be? Is it the sort which you were speaking about—if I am strong and you are, we both are too, and if I am just and you are, we both are too, and if both, also each, and similarly, if I am beautiful and you are, we both are too, and if both, also each? Or does nothing prevent the beautiful from being of the other sort, such as when certain composites are even in number, their components⁴³ are each perhaps odd, perhaps even, or again when the components are each irrational, c the composites are perhaps rational, perhaps irrational, and countless other such things which I asserted were also appearing before me? Among which of these two sorts do you set the beautiful? Or is what has become apparent to me concerning it also apparent to you? For it seems to me to be very illogical that we both are beautiful but not each, or each is, but not both, or anything else of this sort. Do you choose in this way, as I do, or in that way?

HIP.: In this way, Socrates.

- d SOC.: You do well, Hippias, so that we may also be released from more searching. For if the beautiful is among these things, the pleasant through sight and hearing would no longer be beautiful, because the expression "through sight and hearing" makes both beautiful but not each. But this was impossible, as I and you agree, Hippias.

HIP.: Yes, we agree.

⁴³For "composites" the Greek literally reads "both's," i.e., the class of all pairs, and for "components" reads "each's," i.e., the class of all members of pairs.

soc.: So it is impossible that the pleasant through sight and hearing be beautiful since, in becoming beautiful, it presents one of the things that are impossible.

hip.: This is so.

soc.: “Tell me, then, again,” he will say, “from the beginning, since
e you have missed it entirely. What do you assert that this ‘beautiful’ is, the one that pertains to both of the pleasures and on account of which you honored these pleasures before the others and named them beautiful?” It seems to me to be necessary, Hippias, to say that these are the most harmless of the pleasures and the best, both and each. Or have you anything else to say by which they differ from the others?

hip.: Not at all. For, really, they are best.

soc.: “So this,” he will say, “is what you say the beautiful is, helpful pleasure?” We seem likely to, I shall say. And you?

hip.: I, too.

soc.: “Then isn’t that which does the good helpful,” he will say, “but just now that which does and that which is done appeared different, and hasn’t your argument arrived at the earlier argument?
304a For the good would not be beautiful nor the beautiful good, if each of them is something else than the other.” By all means, we shall say, Hippias, if we think soundly. For presumably it is not sanctioned not to agree with one who speaks correctly.

hip.: But, Socrates, what do you suppose all these things together are? They are scrapings and clippings of speeches, as I was just saying, divided up into bits. But the alternative is both beautiful and worth much—to be able to compose a speech well and beautifully in
b a law court or council chamber or in any other ruling group to which the speech is addressed and to go away having persuaded them and taking off not the littlest but the largest of the prizes, the salvation of oneself and one’s money and friends. So one ought to cling to these things, bidding good-bye to those little speeches, in order that one not seem to be exceedingly unintelligent by engaging in babblings and drivel, as we were just now.

soc.: Hippias, my friend, you are blessed because you know what a
c human being ought to pursue, and you have pursued it ably, as you assert. But some daemonic fate, as seems likely, has taken hold of me so that I vacillate⁴⁴ and am always in perplexity, and by exhibiting

⁴⁴Compare the reference to “vacillation” at the end of the *Lesser Hippias*, and note 16 to the translation of that dialogue.

this perplexity of mine to you wise ones, I am in turn bespattered by you in speech whenever I exhibit it. For you people say of me the very things that you too are saying now, that I practice things that are silly and little and worth nothing. Yet whenever I have been persuaded by you people and say just what you do—that it is much the best to be able to succeed in the courtroom or in any other assembly by composing a speech well and beautifully—then I am called all sorts of bad things by some others here and by this fellow who always refutes me. For he happens to be very closely related and to live in the same house. Consequently, whenever I go home into my own house and he hears me saying these things, he asks me if I am not ashamed at daring to converse about beautiful pursuits when I am so manifestly refuted concerning the beautiful because I do not even know what it itself is. “And yet how will you know,” he says, “whether anyone composes a speech beautifully or not, or any other activity whatsoever, if you do not recognize the beautiful? And when this is your condition, do you suppose it is better for you to live rather than to be dead?” The result indeed for me is, as I say, to be reproached and to be badly spoken of by you people and badly by him. Nonetheless, perhaps it is necessary to endure all these things, for it is not strange if it would help me. So, Hippias, I seem to myself to have been helped by my association with both of you. For I seem to myself to know what the proverb means that says, “The beautiful things are difficult.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵This proverb appears elsewhere in Plato in the *Republic* (435c, 497d) and in the *Cratylus* (384a–b). According to a scholium on this passage in the *Greater Hippias*, the proverb was originally Solon’s response to the reason that Pittacus gave for his not wishing to continue as tyrant of Mytilene. His reason was that “it is difficult to remain good.” For a discussion of Pittacus’ statement, see *Protagoras* 339–46.